

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 5, 2015
Testimony in Support of
House Bill #6932: AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE
(with modifications)
Submitted by Tia Murphy of Bethel, CT

Thank you committee members for allowing me to speak about the issue of caregiving and Paid Family & Medical Leave. It is a topic that touches me every day even now that I am no longer an active caregiver.

My name is Tia Murphy, I live in Bethel CT. In 2006, I stepped out of my corporate career as a VP of sales and marketing to combine my household with my physically, mentally and financially healthy 81 year old father.

They say if you want to make God laugh, tell her your plans. That grand laugh came mid-year 2007.

My dad was diagnosed with a massive benign brain tumor. He underwent surgery, regained consciousness, and spoke about his homecoming. A few hours later, he suffered a brain bleed. He was paralyzed and unable to speak. The doctors urged me to find a custodial care facility as my dad would be released in about a week. What they were really saying was place him somewhere where he will be comfortable until he dies. I was given paperwork to sign. When I asked for an explanation, the answer came back to me in dense acronym laden language.

Now I am not a shrinking violet but I was overwhelmed and anxious to do the right thing. I never raised children, never had to make major medical decisions. I was a business person, adrift in a world that spoke an incomprehensible language, operating with an unknown set of laws and rules, being asked to

make life altering decisions with repercussions I could never have anticipated. In other words, a novice caregiver.

As his advocate, his primary caregiver, this cost me time, treasure and future opportunity. I learned how to work Medicare, the VA, and Healthcare, created an ADA compliant basement suite and took care of feeding tube and meds. As a result of my efforts, my dad was awarded the VA's Aid and Attendance benefit. Unfortunately it started the day he died.

We were lucky. We had financial wherewithal to be able to fund what we could and cover my living expenses. But I lost years of economic progress impacting my social security benefits and retirement funding for the rest of my life. Had I been able to take a leave from my work to focus on what I needed to get accomplished, I would be in a far better situation. Would I make the same decision to care for my dad? Yes, without hesitation. Could this all have been done in a manner that did not cause such personal disruption? Yes, with the help of Paid Family Leave.

I urge the Committee to modify HB #6932 to incorporate the recommendations of the Family Medical Leave Insurance Task Force and pass a bill this Legislative Session that will be good for caregivers, good for those they care for and good for Connecticut employers and employees both.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share my story with you to help illuminate the individual impact of caring for our loved ones in times of need.